

C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 005941

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/15/2013

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SUBJECT: MB AND MP'S CONDEMN EU BLACKLISTING OF HAMAS; GOJ AND ISLAMISTS DENOUNCE ISRAELI DECISION TO EXPEL ARAFAT

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires David Hale for Reasons 1.5 (B,D)

SUMMARY

¶1. (U) Both the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood (MB) and a majority of members of Parliament (MP's) publicly rebuked the European Union for its recent moves against the political wing of Hamas. After Israel announced its intention "in principle" to expel Yasser Arafat, the GOJ came out firmly against the decision, while Islamists used it as ammunition in their campaign to cut ties with the Israel.

TAKING AIM AGAINST THE EUROPEANS

¶2. (U) In response to the EU decision to classify the political wing of Hamas as a terrorist group and to freeze its assets, the MB in Jordan issued a harshly worded statement on September 8 denouncing the EU action. Calling on the EU to immediately annul the decision, the MB stated that it was "tantamount to a new crusader's war" and that it was "hostile to our Islamic nation and the Palestinian people because Hamas . . . is the conscience of the Arab and Muslim nation."

¶3. (U) To further express its anger at Brussels, the MB also threatened to call for a boycott of European goods unless the EU backed down from its position. According to the statement, the MB would urge Muslim clerics to issue a fatwa, or religious edict, to enforce the proposed boycott.

¶4. (U) In a related development, 59 out of 110 members of the Lower House of Parliament signed and circulated on September 13 a memorandum condemning the EU decision, alleging that it came under U.S. pressure and revealed an unacceptable bias towards Israeli occupation. The memo further stated that by supporting Israeli "injustice," the EU was depriving itself of a political role in the region.

A RESOUNDING "NO" TO BANISHING ARAFAT

¶5. (U) Apart from the EU action, there was also widespread opposition to the recent Israeli decision "in principle" to expel Yasser Arafat. According to the local press, Foreign Minister Marwan Muasher deemed it a "dangerous" move with serious repercussions for the region, while Information Minister Nabil Sharif described the decision as a "serious mistake."

¶6. (U) Hamzah Mansour, the secretary general of the Islamic Action Front (IAF), the political arm of the MB, described the Israeli decision as "humiliating" to the Palestinians, and called on Arab nations that have relationships with Israel to immediately cut all ties and to expel Israeli ambassadors from Arab capitals.

¶7. (U) The IAF also led a charge against Israel's expulsion decision in Parliament. Seventeen MP's signed a letter urging the GOJ to play a more vigorous role to "expose Israeli practices," including the effort to banish Arafat, "a legitimate leader elected by the Palestinian people." Fourteen IAF MP's signed a memorandum denouncing the Israeli action as a "criminal and reckless decision" and threatened to ask the Lower House of Parliament to annul or abrogate the peace treaty between Jordan and Israel.

COMMENT

¶8. (C) The fact that a majority of MP's denounced in writing the EU action against Hamas shows that, while Jordanians may not approve of Hamas tactics and violence, many nevertheless see it as a legitimate resistance group providing valuable social services. (We note that the GOJ has just decided to freeze Hamas assets in Jordan - septel.) The dearth of signatures on the other memorandums reflects far less approval in Parliament for efforts to cut Jordanian ties with Israel.

